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Approved For Release 2003/08/18 : CIA-RDP86T00608R000700120008-5

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CIA/OSR 25X1 MEMO RA 751143

3 November 1975

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Morocco-Algeria: Military Capabilities and  
Likely Outcome of Hostilities

The military balance between Morocco and Algeria favors Algeria. Its military establishment is superior to that of Morocco because it has more combat aircraft and better equipped ground forces. Over the long haul its forces would be expected to win a conventional war. In such a war, the Algerians probably are capable of taking and holding territory from Moroccan forces.

Neither side, however, has the logistical capability to sustain major combat operations in the border area with Spanish Sahara for more than a few weeks. Both sides are likely to resort to raids, ambushes, and other hit-and-run tactics. Such tactics place a premium on mobility and timely intelligence, assets which the Algerians with their larger air force and better equipped army are more likely to be able to bring to bear during the course of combat.

Ground Forces

Algeria's 60,000 man ground force is about the same size as that of Morocco, but the Algerians are better equipped with tanks, artillery, and armored personnel carriers. The Algerians also are generally better trained. They would be expected to fare well with their superior mobility and firepower coupled with superior air support.

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[REDACTED]

In the immediate tri-border area, the Algerians are currently outnumbered, although over the past several weeks, they have been reinforcing their 4,000-6,000 man force based near Tindouf. The Moroccans have had some 12,000 to 15,000 men, primarily infantry, in southern Morocco since last year. These forces are equipped with some artillery, armor, and air defense guns and shoulder-fired missiles. [REDACTED]

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These steps might enable Morocco to achieve some initial successes against the Algerian forces in the area providing the Moroccans did not have to contend simultaneously with significant Spanish forces. However, the Algerians could penetrate elsewhere along their long common border--in the north for example--and employ their air force to locate and attack Moroccan units, supply lines, and command centers.

#### Air Forces

Properly employed, the Algerian air force could play a decisive role in limiting Moroccan army attacks and supporting Algerian ground operations. Algeria has about 200 Soviet-built light bombers, fighter-bombers, and fighters, many of which could be brought to bear quickly, although operations in the tri-border area would be hampered by the lack of airfields. Moroccan air power is limited to about 20 US-built F-5s and another 20 or so French-built Fouga Magister jet trainers. Only about half of these aircraft could be mustered for combat missions at one time, however, because of maintenance problems and a shortage of qualified air crews.

Algeria's air force is so much larger than Morocco's that it could simultaneously provide ground support and launch attacks to at least neutralize and probably destroy Moroccan air power. Although Morocco's air defenses would be expected to destroy some Algerian aircraft, Morocco has neither an adequate number nor sufficiently modern air defense weapons to effectively

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defend its army or other military and civilian targets. Algeria's air defense system, on the other hand, is in relatively good condition and should be able to counter any threat from the Moroccans.

Naval Forces

Neither navy would be expected to make a major contribution to their country's war effort. The Algerian navy has more ships, including missile boats, and they are in better shape than those of Morocco.

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Major Items Of Equipment

	<u>Morocco</u>	<u>Algeria</u>
Medium Tanks	55	400
Armored Personnel Carriers	90	575
Field Artillery	175	500
Air Defense Artillery	80	450
Light Bombers	0	23
Jet Fighters	40	200

*These figures are rounded estimates of each country's inventory and are listed to illustrate the relative differences between the holdings of the two sides. The actual number of each item available in operational units would be less, but the relative differences would still weigh heavily in Algeria's favor.*

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